

Testimony before the CGA Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing on Proposed FY 23 Adjustments for Higher Ed Agencies
February 22, 2022
Submitted by Susan Lounsbury

Thank you, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representatives Dathan and Nolan, and members of the Appropriations Committee for the opportunity to address you today.

My name is Susan Lounsbury and I live in Simsbury, CT. I am a Professor of Mathematics and co-discipline coordinator at Tunxis Community College, where I have worked since 2006. I am writing to express my strong support for ensuring our community college system is sufficiently funded so we can serve our students and communities.

I support the Board of Regents request for additional funding for our community college system. In recent years we have seen a decline in the services we are able to provide students due to understaffing of student-facing positions and insufficient resources. Increased funding is critically necessary to ensure we can provide high-quality services to our students and communities. We are the wealthiest state in the country, and we have a duty to support the community colleges who serve predominantly people of color and those who will benefit the most from the upward mobility of a college degree.

This is also why I oppose the recommended 5% tuition increase that the BOR Finance Committee has recommended for students. I disagree with our community college system increasing tuition on our students because so many of our students are already struggling to balance their school, work, and family demands. Increasing tuition continues to shift the burden of education to those in our communities with the least resources.

The block grant allocated to the community colleges and state universities has not increased over the years while the amount being kept at the system office has increased significantly. We need that money to be redirected back to students and we need oversight of the system office.

The Board of Regents is proposing a restructuring of the community colleges which will reduce both services and curriculum. One of the most egregious examples of this is the ACME (Alignment and Completion of Math and English) proposal which would eliminate all developmental education in math and English by 2025. I served on the ACME committee at the beginning and I am currently an active member of CMAC (The Connecticut Math Advisory Council) and the Board's proposal does not reflect faculty recommendations and goes against the community college mission. I fear how this policy will affect our neediest students.

The Board of Regents for Higher Education is currently threatening to layoff student-facing community college employees. This is reprehensible, particularly given the fact that over the past three years the Board of Regents and CSCU managers have hired dozens of managers – Regional Presidents, Vice Presidents, Associate Vice Presidents – costing millions of dollars. These management positions are completely redundant, wasteful, and are siphoning resources away from community college campuses.

Our public higher education system needs more resources so we can fulfill our mission of providing pathways to higher education, gainful employment, and life-changing knowledge and skills to the residents of CT. Thank you for all of your efforts to support this.